

12/17/2015-SPECIAL ORDERED

BILL NO. 31-0295

Thirty-first Legislature of the Virgin Islands

December 17, 2015

An Act providing for temporary housing for the Governor of the Virgin Islands and for other purposes

PROPOSED BY: Senators Clifford F. Graham, Myron D. Jackson and Kurt A. Violet
 Co Sponsors: Janette Millin Young, Sammuel Sanes, Neville James,
 Justin Harrigan, Sr., Almando “Rocky” Liburd, Jean A. Forde,
 Marvin Blyden and Novelle Francis, Jr.

1 **WHEREAS**, the Organic Act of 1954, as revised, states that the Governor shall maintain
2 his official residence in Government House on St. Thomas; and

3 **WHEREAS**, the third floor of Government House has historically been used as the official
4 residence of the Governor of the United States Virgin Islands; and

5 **WHEREAS**, in 1995, the 5th elected Governor of the Virgin Islands, Governor Roy L.
6 Schneider converted the third floor of Government House into additional office space for the
7 Office of the Governor and for the most part the third floor has been used as office space since that
8 period in time; and

9 **WHEREAS**, the Government of the Virgin Islands acquired "Denmark Hill" Remainder
10 of Estate Catherineberg No. 8 Great Northside Quarter, St. Thomas, USVI, consisting of 6.23
11 acres, more or less, as shown on PWD Map No. D9-3470-T86 (herein referred to as

“Catherineberg”) as part of the transaction that purchased the West Indian Company Limited from Denmark and placed this property under the ownership of the West Indian Company; and

WHEREAS, the West Indian Company-owned Catherineberg property contains structures that were used as the residence of the former Directors of the West Indian Company prior to the acquisition of the property by the Government of the Virgin Islands in 1993; and

WHEREAS, the West Indian Company has leased this property to the Government of the Virgin Islands for a nominal fee of \$1.00 per year since the acquisition for the purpose of housing the Governor of the Virgin Islands; and

WHEREAS, the West Indian Company is exempt from the payment of property taxes but in lieu thereof is assessed a Payment In Lieu of Property Taxes (PILOT) in the amount of \$700,000 annually; and

WHEREAS, the West Indian Company is several years behind in the payment of the PILOT and owes the Government of the Virgin Islands \$5.9 million as of September 30, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the 7th elected Governor, John P. Dejongh, resided at his personal residence during the entire time of his tenure as Governor leaving Catherineberg unoccupied as a living quarters and as a result of this lack of use some build-up of mold in the residence rendering it uninhabitable and unusable at the moment; and

WHEREAS, On January 5, 2015, Governor Kenneth Mapp was sworn in as the 8th elected Governor of the Virgin Islands; and

WHEREAS, the 8th elected Governor of the Virgin Islands has had to reside in a rented property or hotel rooms while staying in the Capital, which is inconsistent with the mandate under the Organic Act of the Virgin Islands; Now, Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. (a) To resolve the ongoing effort to find suitable housing for the Governor of the Virgin Islands, the Government of the Virgin Islands, acting through the West Indian Company shall negotiate with the owner of Parcels No. 21, 22, 23 and 24 Dronningen's Gade, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands to acquire such property for no more than the average appraised value of three recent independent appraisals.

(b) In the interim while negotiations and closing documents are being prepared, the Government of the Virgin Islands acting through the West Indian Company may lease Parcels No. 21, 22, 23 and 24 Dronningen's Gade, St. Thomas, VI for no more than \$8,000.00 per month providing that such lease payments shall be credited towards the acquisition of such property.

(c) The Government of the Virgin Islands working with the West Indian Company shall conduct a security review of Parcels No. 21, 22, 23 and 24 Dronningen's Gade, St. Thomas, VI, and develop a scope of work to enhance the security requirement of such parcels.

(d) The West Indian Company shall pay the cost of acquisition of Parcels No. 21, 22, 23 and 24 Dronningen's Gade, St. Thomas, VI and the security enhancement and deduct any amount spent from the Payment in Lieu of Property Taxes owed to the Government of the Virgin Islands.

SECTION 2. The Government of the Virgin Islands shall prepare the necessary documents to combine and incorporate Parcels No. 21, 22, 23 and 24 Dronningen's Gade, St. Thomas, VI into Parcel No. 21 & 22 Kongen's Gade.

SECTION 3. All cost of maintenance and upkeep of Parcels No. 21, 22, 23 and 24 Dronningen's Gade, St. Thomas, VI must be borne by the Government of the Virgin Islands.

BILL SUMMARY

This bill provides for temporary housing for the Governor until property is purchased and added on to the property on which the Government House is located.

BR15-1153/December 15, 2015/AA